



The City of Huntsville's Big Springs International Park

The Canadian goose is a majestic (5 – 15 pounds) migratory species that was feared extinct in the 1950's due to over-hunting and loss of natural habitat. With improved game laws, habitat recreation and preservation programs, their populations have recovered dynamically. Captured breeding programs to aid with repopulation created a non-migrating, but active breeding group of these birds. As American's have continued to change our country's landscape, we've created a haven for our geese. Urban rich green lawns, golf courses and parks coupled with ponds and lakes are considered paradise by all birds, but especially large numbers of Canadian geese. In the last 30 years in our country, Canadian geese started to gain attention in a less than ideal fashion. Many urban wildlife species, including the Canadian geese have been named 'nuisance wildlife.'

At Big Springs International Park, although feeding these birds feels rewarding, entertaining, and almost magical, we have created issues for not only the geese, but other park participants. Specifically, these are the following concerns:

- Bread, popcorn, and crackers are an unnatural diet for these birds and can lead to serious malnutrition conditions
- Hand feeding urban wildlife leads to habituation (animals become comfortable with humans) and results in frightening goose aggression toward humans to human aggression
- The Canadian goose, especially when feed, can defecate up to 5 pounds of feces each day
- Geese fecal material affects the beauty and cleanliness of our park's walkways and grassy areas
- The fecal material, on land and in the water and high volumes of unnatural food sources create inappropriate mineral levels in our pond which has a devastating affects our fish's lives each summer
- The fecal material is slippery and has led to unfortunate human slips, falls, and injuries

If we can change our behavior our park's urban wildlife will benefit. By feeding an appropriate and smaller quantity of food to our birds and geese, we can still enjoy feeding, but we will reduce our footprint on their lives. Please consider not only the animals, but your fellow park goers. Use the feeding station to enjoy Huntsville's age old tradition of feeding our park's pets.